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March 3, 2016

Statement of the Connecticut Food Association - COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN

Wayne Pesce, President, Connecticut Food Association

In opposition of raised bill 5300: AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS IN CHILDREN'S FOOD

The Connecticut Food Association (CFA) proudly advocates on behalf of the food retail industry. Its mission is to cultivate Connecticut's grocery industry through economic development, nutrition & wellness, environmental stewardship and community service. CFA membership covers the spectrum of diverse venues where food is sold, including single owner grocery stores, large supermarket chains, food distributors, food manufacturers, and specialty food purveyors.

On behalf of Connecticut's grocery retailers, I urge you to oppose SB 226 - To require infant formula, baby food and children's foods that are produced partially or entirely with genetically engineered materials to be labelled as such.

Local Action:

Just last year supporters of GMO product labeling lauded the state legislature's approval of the current bill, even though some felt it represented a significant weakening of the initial proposal. It correctly enacted the introduction of a **bipartisan compromise requiring that four additional states, one of which must border Connecticut, pass labeling laws as well**. An additional requirement is that the aggregate population of any combination of such states exceed 20 million people.

Federal Options:

Earlier this week the United States Senate Agriculture Committee voted to pass what's called the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act (SAFE). The bill, if voted into law, would block states from requiring labels on genetically modified foods. The bill, would require the federal government to put in place a nationwide voluntary labeling standard for GMO foods, as opposed to a mandatory labeling standard, which many states (including Vermont, Connecticut, and Maine) are pushing for. **In other words, the bill would strike down state laws** that require manufacturers to acknowledge GMOs on food labels. Vermont's mandatory GMO labeling law is slated to take effect in July.

Conclusion:

We believe this proposal has real merit, however Connecticut's current GMO law strikes the right balance (for now) by ensuring the consumers right to know what is in their food while shielding small businesses from liability that could leave them at a competitive disadvantage. Potential Federal action and action in contiguous state will help evolve GMO policy and get us to the right balance in Connecticut on this important consumer initiative.

433 South Main Street, Suite 309, West Hartford, CT 06110

email: ctfood@ctfoodassociation.org · www.ctfoodassociation.org · (860) 216-4055